

CLAIMS

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1. ~~A latching apparatus comprising:~~
- 5 a post member defining,
 an elongated axis,
 an elongated, laterally extending latching
 surface defined at an outer radius from
 said axis, and
10 an elongated, laterally extending
 releasing surface defined at an inner
 radius from said axis, wherein said
 outer radius is greater than said inner
 radius;
- 15 a latching assembly defining a passage for
 receiving said post member and including a
 grip means extending at least partially into
 said passage for,
20 effecting a grip between said post member
 and said latching assembly when said
 grip means engages said latching
 surface, and
 releasing said grip between said post
 member and said latching assembly when
 said grip means engages said releasing
25 surface; and
 a moving means for,
 moving said latching surface into
 engagement with said grip means,
 whereby said grip is effected between
30 said post member and said latching
 assembly, and
 moving said releasing surface into
 engagement with said grip means,
 whereby said grip is released between
35 said post member and said latching

assembly.

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~~2. Apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said releasing surface defines a smooth surface.~~

3. Apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said latching surface defines a notched surface.

4. Apparatus of Claim 3, wherein said notched surface includes, at least, a plurality of teeth.

5. Apparatus of Claim 1,

wherein said grip means includes, at least, a ball, and

wherein said latching means further comprises, an inner shell defining said passage and further defining a radial opening in said inner shell, wherein said ball is located in and radially movable within said radial opening,

an outer shell positioned outside said inner shell, wherein said inner shell is axially slidable in a first direction and a second direction with respect to said outer shell, said outer shell including, at least, a tapered portion defining a tapered inner surface adjacent to said ball, and a biasing means for biasing said inner shell axially in said first direction such that said ball is biased into engagement with said tapered inner surface, whereby said ball is biasly urged radially inwardly into said passage, wherein said biasing means

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accommodates movement of said inner
shell in said second direction to
accommodate radial movement of said
ball out of said passage.

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